

GamerZines

ISSUE 15 | APRIL 2014

FirstLook

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 GAMING'S FINEST DICTATOR SIM RETURNS!
WORLD'S FIRST HANDS-ON AND INTERVIEW

TROPICO 5



The Elder Scrolls

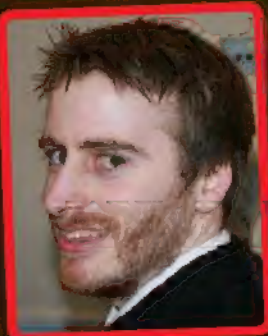
— O N L I N E —



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WELCOME TO FirstLook



The UK has its fair share of videogame showcases, but over the past three years Rezzed has absolutely become our favourite. This is due to three things: firstly Rezzed is the only show that puts PC gaming first, secondly it usually attracts a decent

number of attendees (but not too many) and thirdly, it's the only show we can think of that offers up as much space to independent developers as it does big, glitzy publishers. These factors result in a show that regularly surprises and delights, and if you happen to be near Birmingham at the end of March next year, we strongly advise you attend.

Many of the features and previews in this month's issue came from attending that show, so this month we are rather PC focused, but frankly that's where all the exciting games land anyway. This month we have some excellent articles for you, including previews of *Tropico 5*, *Wildstar* and more, as well as a rather special chat with Stainless Games about their *Carmageddon*-related revival.

Enjoy the issue!

Andy Griffiths, Editor
FIRSTLOOK@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

Still pondering
gaming's
illustrious future...



TAYLOR DINKLEMAN
Wants his flying car, right now!

Don't miss!
*This month's
top highlights!*



LANDMARK



TRIALS FUSION



WILDSTAR



**COMPANY OF
HEROES 2**



EL PRESIDENTE LETS US GET OUR GRUBBY HANDS ON **TROPICO 5**



REVIVING A LEGEND **CARMAGEDDON: REINCARNATION**

QUICK FINDER



Warside
CoH2: The
Western Front
Armies
Quantum Rush
Wildstar
Carmageddon:
Reincarnation
PreOrder
MustHaves

Murdered:
Soul Suspect
Tropico 5
Landmark
Trials Fusion
Game On: DLC,
UGC, Beta and
Early Access
Round-up

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WARSIDE

PUB: KRAKEN GAMES
DEV: IN-HOUSE
PLATFORM: PC
ETA: 2014
(ON STEAM
GREENLIGHT)

CUSTOMISABLE CO-OP CONTRA

Ever since we became obsessed with Arrowhead's absurd yet brilliant multiplayer shooter, *The Showdown Effect*, last year we've been yearning for another 2.5D arena to showcase our mad side-scroller shooting skills. *Warside* might just be the answer to that undeniably niche need.

Kraken Games' blisteringly paced release is already a hit in Russia and the studio is now looking to bring *Warside* to Western shores via Steam's Greenlight initiative. So what makes this release different from the litany of other shooters out there? Simple: variety and choice.

The character customisation system in *Warside* allows players to change not only weaponry but the role of their character – empowering players to switch between shield-imbued health sponges to sneaky jet pack-enhanced rogues with just a few clicks. Missions straddle the line between competitive and co-operative multiplayer, with one scenario involving two teams shooting at each other in dank bases, while another may involve defending artefacts in an Arctic temple from waves of AI. Here's hoping *Warside* wins the support it, in our opinion at least, clearly deserves. ■





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AS DELIGHTFULLY
AS EVER'
GAMER

TROPICO 5

'TROPICO 5 IS A CITY BUILDER WORTH
GETTING EXCITED ABOUT'
- IGN



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PREVIEW

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FirstLook | Preview

TRAILER
OF THE
MONTH

MURDERED: SOUL SUSPECT

PUB: SQUARE-ENIX
DEV: ARTTIGHT GAMES
PLATFORM: PC
LAST GAME:
SOUL FJORD
ETA: JUNE

SOLVE YOUR OWN MURDER

Despite our love for interactive thrillers, *Murdered: Soul Suspect* has flown successful under our radar for the past nine months. First unveiled at E3 2013, we had never heard of this release until a certain film noir-inspired trailer arrived in our inbox.

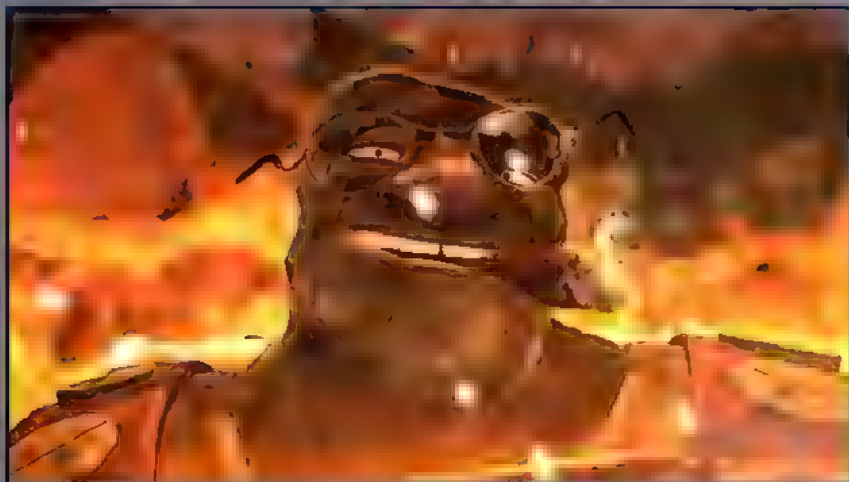
Soul Suspect is a third-person adventure from the makers of *Quantum Conundrum* and stars Detective Ronan O'Connor who has the curious task of solving his own murder, after he was flung out of a fourth-storey window thanks to a mysterious cloaked villain. Ronan must survey scenes, watch civilians and solve puzzles as a ghost

to find the answers he craves, which is tough when he can't be seen by any human being. Well, apart from a girl named Joy who can not only see and hear the detective, but also help him solve his case long after he's shuffled off this fragile mortal coil.

This nifty premise has been compared to Capcom's brilliant handheld adventure, *Ghost Trick*, but *Murdered: Soul Suspect* sports a distinctly darker vibe with soul-eating monsters, regular references to the occult and a story-driven campaign set entirely in Salem. Oh yes, it is indeed 'that' kind of occult. ■

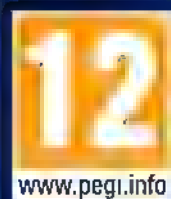


WILDSTAR



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SHOW OFF YOUR WILD SIDE



www.WildStar-Online.com

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ncs

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Carbine

Alien: Isolation

Creative Assembly to make the xenomorph scary again

Since Rebellion, Monolith and Gearbox Software got their hands on H.R. Giger's legendary xenomorph not much has gone right for the extra-terrestrial serpent, uh, thing. It isn't that these studios didn't recognise the terror of inner jaws, razor-sharp tails and acid blood, it's just that they didn't construct games around the interstellar beast that actually emphasised its terrifying form. If anything, *Alien vs Predator* and *Colonial Marines*

made the creature seem dull and one-dimensional, but Creative Assembly are set to reverse that trend with a sci-fi survival horror game that'll make players tremble at the mere blip of a 'xeno' on their motion tracker.

This month a release date was confirmed for *Isolation*, resulting in this title's hype train entering high gear. For the love of everything *Alien*, please, please, please be good!



PUB: SEGA
DEV: Creative Assembly

PLAT: PC Xbox One
PlayStation 4
PS3 Xbox 360
ETA: 7th October

Wolfenstein: The New Order

PUB: Bethesda
DEV: MachineGames
PLAT: PC, Xbox 360, XOne, PS4, PS3
ETA: 20th May



While the star pre-order this month comes with a slight feeling of trepidation, *Wolfenstein: TNO* only inspires confidence regarding its eventual quality. We've already

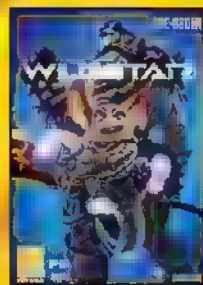
played MachineGames' reboot several times, and every time we've come away feeling excited and energised about this series' return. If you love first-person shooters with heart and soul, pick this up ASAP!

Wildstar

PUB: NCSoft
DEV: Carbine Studios
PLAT: PC
ETA: 3rd June

Did you know that June 3rd is two days after the birthday of a certain editor of a certain magazine hosted on GamerZines.com? Well it certainly is, and he'll undoubtedly be

pleased to learn that headstart access for *Wildstar* begins May 31st. We're not saying we know what to get him this year, but timecards for subscription MMOs are never a bad gift...





Watch Dogs

PUB: Ubisoft
DEV: in-house
PLAT: Wii U, PC, Xbox 360, Xbox One, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 3
ETA: 27th May

Would you look at all those platforms? Ubisoft aren't risking alienating any platform allegiances with *Watch Dogs* and by all accounts the open-

world hack-'em-up is shaping up great. The even better news is that the game's arrival isn't too far off now, so the world will finally know what all the fuss has been about!

PUB: Ubisoft
DEV: In-house
PLAT: PC, PS4, Xbox One, Xbox 360
ETA: 30th April

Child of Light

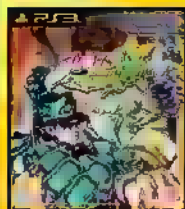
If you're tired of the bang, bang, die, die culture that persists throughout videogames, *Child of Light* should be right up your street. This JRPG tells the tale of a girl saving

a fantasy kingdom from an evil queen by recapturing the moon, sun and the stars. We reckon this will be one of those games that stays with you long after you stop playing.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure

PUB: Namco Bando
DEV: CyberConnect
PLAT: PS3
ETA: 25th April



Against all odds, Namco Bando is bringing CyberConnect's vibrant beat-'em-up, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle* to our unassuming European shores. The

PS3-exclusive dedicated to Hirohiko Araki's bizarre Japanese manga arrives in April and we can't wait to see what cheeky content has evaded Western censors!

Mario Golf: World Tour



PUB:
Nintendo
DEV:
In-house
PLAT:
Nintendo 3DS
ETA: 2nd May

Mario sports games have become an increasingly shameful vice over the years, but honestly there's still a part of us that loves them. We would never buy a golf game usual hell, that sport is duller than curling – but the fact that an Italian plumber is on the cover piques our interest. Pretty sneaky N'intendo.

Killer is Dead



PUB: Deep Silver
DEV: Kadokawa Games/
Grasshopper
Manufacture
PLAT: PC
ETA: 9th May

Lots of experiences that previously were console-only are now making their way to PC. *Killer is Dead* is one such title. The latest sexually charged slash-'em-up from Suda 51 is already available for consoles, but the PC version includes all pre-order and post-release DLC for no extra cost. Don't you just love open platforms?



T
AC



www.watchdogs.ubi.com

18

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WATCH DOGS™

HACKING IS OUR WEAPON



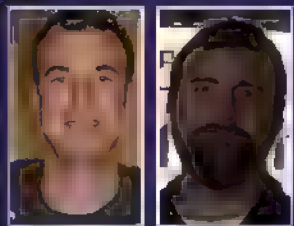
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THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACTION-ADVENTURE GAMING

INTERVIEW

GREG WILSON & QUINN DUFFY COMPANY OF HEROES 2 INTERVIEW

BIO



Greg Wilson and Quinn Duffy have been working on *Company of Heroes* from the beginning. Greg is the franchise's Executive Producer and Quinn is Creative Director. Both are keeping Relic's bearded-to-designer ratio very high, despite what pictorial evidence may suggest.

Relic tell us all about their standalone expansion

Mere moments after Relic Entertainment's Greg Wilson and Quinn Duffy revealed the existence of the standalone expansion *The Western Front Armies* to a packed audience at the Eurogamer's recent Rezzed event, we grabbed the duo from the stage to discuss exactly what all this new multiplayer content will bring to a series which has come to define the RTS genre on PC.

The bearded ones were more than happy to discuss the series so far, Relic under SEGA and what *TWFA* will bring to the online arena. Here's how our discussion played out...

Great to see you guys again, and announcing something new at Rezzed no less. Why did Relic decide to return to the Western Front now with *Company of Heroes 2's* first expansion?

QD: Because the fans wanted it! The multiplayer community is the engaged community and we wanted to give them more great content to play with and we wanted to work on the Western Front again.

GW: We're building towards the ultimate World War 2 experience with the franchise, right? So we're building tools for ourselves and the community, so it's really exciting.



Make way for the Sturmmörserwagen 606/4 mit 38 cm RW 61, more commonly known as the Sturmtiger rocket launcher tank!

Expansion, The Western Front Armies

Okay, so let's get the facts sorted. This expansion is standalone, it includes US and German Oberkommando West armies, along with eight multiplayer maps which can also be played in Skirmish mode against AI. Is there a story-driven campaign in the expansion as well?

GW: Not in this release, no. The unique thing with this expansion is that in the multiplayer auto-match pool you will get access to the existing Eastern Front maps.

You'll also get the Western Front seasonal maps with this pack - you'll get the AI and you'll get to participate in the extended

progression system that we're building for the entire game. All the new units, tactical strategies and all that kind of stuff. You can play those in comp stomp, against the AI or any kind of setup you want in Custom Games, but when you go into auto-match it's Axis versus Allies, and both fronts are represented. It's an interesting mix and you get exposed to all this new content as well as thousands of user generated maps from the Steam Workshop.

Why did you guys elect not to put a story-driven campaign in this expansion? Do you feel as though you've already told ➤



Paratrooper units return in *The Western Armies*, a bet with a new risk versus reward mechanic according to Quinn

enough stories from the Western Front when you look back at the original *Company of Heroes* and its expansions?

QD: It's not a feel thing, because I think there are lots of stories left to tell in World War 2. Even from a practical development standpoint, having finished armies to build content on in the future is way better than building content at the same time as building armies. For us, it's great to focus on building great armies that are fully fledged, integrated and balanced. After that we've got this toolset to create whatever we want.

Certain fans still aren't happy with aerial units and feel as though they can be expanded upon. Is that something you guys recognise?

QD: Partly, yes. That's why we made the changes we did to air units in *Company of Heroes 2*, but so much of the experience is focused on that frontline and to do real control justice to air units. To make them feel

and look fast, you've got to pull the camera up so high that the ground units essentially disappear from the experience.

There are some practical reasons behind the way it's set up as well. The one thing we don't want is a 3000bhp P-47 [Thunderbolt] to just fly little circles on the battlefield as that would take away the realism from the experience. Instead we want these things to rip in, drop a shit-ton of payload and then tear ass back out again.

In your reveal presentation you showed off a pre-Alpha trailer of the expansion, and we have to say seeing dozens upon dozens of paratroopers landing on lush green unspoilt farmland did give us goosebumps! Will paratroopers be different in this expansion than they were in the first *CoH*?

QD: We refer to them as 'Paradrop Version 2'. Paratroopers were able to drop into the map in the original *Company of Heroes*, and we want



Company of Heroes 2 was withdrawn from sale in certain Russian territories earlier in the year. No doubt this expansion's content should prove much less controversial to certain audiences, although we have some interesting theories on how Relic will emulate German forces being pushed to the wall during the latter stages of the war, such as the increased involvement of the Hitler Youth and child soldiers. Again, it's just a theory

to take that further. There's an element of risk with paratroopers in the real world and we want to make sure that the player has this risk/reward payoff as well.

We'd love to see you guys have another go at a Western Front campaign with the new engine and the paratrooper source material in particular, a la *Band of Brothers*. Is there room for that do you think?

GW: Yeah, I think there is. It's a big war and there are so many stories to tell! We're just getting started! We're 10 months in currently and *Company of Heroes 1* was a six-year lifecycle, and we want this to be even bigger than that.

By the time *The Western Front Armies* releases we'll be roughly 12 months in, so this is just another big step forward for us. We're definitely going to continue delivering great content, both in and out of World War 2, for a long time to come.

We're going to continue delivering great content, both in and out of World War 2

Visually, the map design seems much more colourful and varied as well. It looks like a new game of sorts.

QD: I know we talk a lot about the Western Front, but we're still supporting the whole game with improvements which will benefit all the armies and all the players. We have a few new really compelling technical features which we'll get into the game and spice everything up. The Battle Server stuff [essentially dedicated server tech for matches] is just the tip of the iceberg of what we're doing behind the scenes.

We're building a toolkit for ourselves as well as the community, so the Battle Server tech opened doors up to features





Battlefields still deform realistically, so expect a map's look and feel to change drastically from the beginning of the map to the end

which people have been asking about for a long time, which we can now think about supporting. Visually, maps are now vivid and vibrant, with really lush pristine environments, and by the end of the game they are completely wrecked. There's even a winter melt in the winter maps, so you'll start to see some of the foliage grow out of the melting snow.

QD: We're giving maps their own visual stamp, so you'll be able to tell at a glance whether a certain map is from the Eastern Front or the Western Front.

Company of Heroes 2's big innovation was the blizzard mechanic, which could impact troop health if they weren't in cover. Is there anything in Western Front that is that much of a gamechanger?

QD: We've got a lot of changes in the tactical combat layer. Something that we did recently

(25th March) was align the existing armies and get them ready for June. So there's a lot more tactical gameplay in terms of infantry, which was a real sweet spot for us. We wanted to extend that a little bit more and we've got a new German army which has a new territory control system, and there's a lot of strategy that emerges out of that.

We aren't a big economy game, and capturing territory is a big part of it and they have a very unique way of expanding their economy inspired by late-War Germany's struggles with resources. We work those mechanics right into the design of the faction and Greg mentioned the audio...

GW: Oh yeah. It's not necessarily a feature, but it certainly adds to the quality and the immersion. On *CoH 2* we did live weapon recordings – we had a team go out into the desert, they got all these weapons and put microphones on every part of the weapon to the guy



"Wait, it's called *The Western Front Armies*? Not the *Wesker Front Armies*? Get Capcom and SEGA on the phone! I have a great idea for a new crossover ..."

firing to the clip and bullets hitting bushes in the distance. Our sound designers mixed them all together to create a soundscape for weapons which was ultra-realistic.

For *The Western Front Armies* they came back to us and said we have an opportunity to do this with vehicles, so we gave them the funds and they rented a bunch of tanks, went into the Californian desert and they stuck microphones on every part of a tank you could imagine and recorded all these creaks, draws, engine revs etc. They profiled these mechanical behemoths and built that soundscape back in the game for tanks and it sounds incredible!

QD: The maps, too. There's some very cool forest gameplay where Truesight plays into that even more, and map design takes more advantage of that. We have infantry-only areas in a number of maps. This all adds a dimension to the experience and makes these maps unique.

“ They stuck microphones on every part of a tank you could imagine ”

Looking towards the far-flung future, will the *Company of Heroes* series ever focus on a conflict other than World War 2?

QD: When we looked at restarting *Company of Heroes* for the sequel, the first thing we did was come up with guiding principles and we know that the original had compelling guiding principles, but also a deep focus on World War 2. The new ones though are setting agnostic, so as long as we deliver on the principles of what we feel is a *Company of Heroes* game then we can set it anywhere. ■

***Company of Heroes 2: The Western Front Armies* will be released in June and will cost around \$20.**

TROPICO 5

WORLD EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON

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A political dynasty to last the ages

Political satire is something which movies, television and music regularly feature, yet for some reason game developers aren't too keen on upstaging the political class. Sure we have series like Firaxis' *Civilization*, Positech's *Democracy* and Paradox Interactives' *Crusader Kings*, but for the most part these are dry interpretations of the practices associated with those strange, little creatures that decide they, above all others, are perfectly suited to rule the masses. It takes a strange kind of hubris to

become a career politician and for whatever reason (call it fear, laziness, risk of alienating gamers or whatever), developers for the most part have shied away from this kind of content.

Enter *Tropico 5*, the management sim equivalent of Britain's most popular literary political piss-taker, *Private Eye*. Bulgarian developer, Haemimont Games has been quietly caricaturing the most powerful nations and their rulers for years inside this series, and the fifth game within it is by far their



**GRAND
NEW
GREENS**



PREVIEW



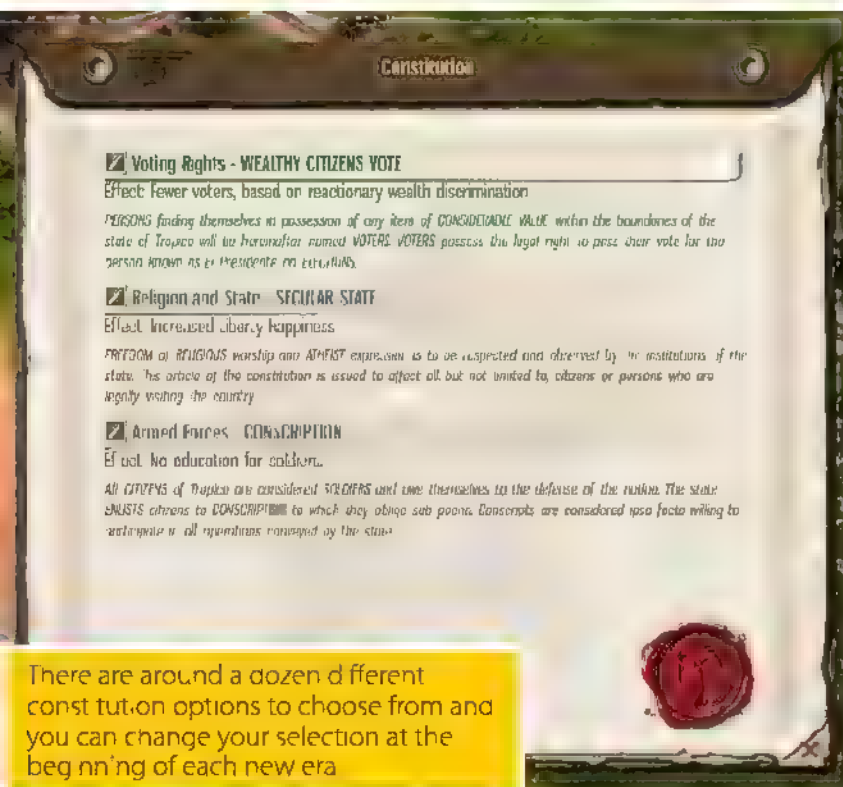
Players shouldn't worry about putting buildings like churches down until they have enough mines, docks and plantations to get a good economy running



best, most varied and cheekiest creation to date.

The basic premise of this release is simple: you with the help of advisors and a fully customisable dictator, help govern an under-developed island located in the Caribbean in any

way you see fit. Want to turn your island into an autocratic military regime which immediately kills all dissenters? Go ahead! How about a liberal paradise which praises the pen over the sword? That sounds airy fairy to us, but that's totally possible as well! *Tropicoco 5*



"Want to turn your island into an autocratic military regime which immediately kills all dissenters? Go ahead!"

gives you an abundance of edicts, buildings and constitutional options to rule the way you want – and vitally doesn't judge you if you want to pursue more nefarious policies, like restricting the vote to the land-owning gentry, declaring martial law or holding mardi-gras festivals to distract the masses from more

There are around a dozen different constitution options to choose from and you can change your selection at the beginning of each new era



Exports are the backbone of your island's economy, regardless of the era

INTERVIEW

RISER DYNAKOV

Producer/political liaison to El Presidente

***Tropico 5* is coming to PlayStation 4 in addition to Xbox 360 and PC.**

How difficult was it to port the game to a next-gen platform? Are there any differences between the PC and PS4 versions?

We are really enthusiastic to work on next-gen console platforms. Of course, there are certain challenges from the fact that *Tropico 5* is the first title from Haemimont Games to be released on any of the PlayStation consoles. However, we believe right now is the time to do it, because the next-gen consoles finally offer performance on par with the current PC systems.

There will be differences between the PC and PS4 versions in the way the player interacts with the game, but we strive for a gaming experience on par with the PC version in terms of quality.

This is also the first game in the series to feature competitive and co-operative multiplayer. Do you have any reservations about this after seeing *SimCity*, another high-profile management game, get lambasted for its game-changing multiplayer?

Here at Haemimont Games we discussed different approaches to multiplayer internally back when we were developing *Tropico 3* and then *Tropico 4*, and now is the time when we finally have the right approach for the game. The multiplayer, together with the expanded battles, pose a balance threat. There is a way the temptation for the player to approach the game in a RTS-like fashion and this is one of the reasons why we have kept the battle simulation quite light. We do not believe this is where the heart of *Tropico* lies, so we have implemented a specific set of rules with long-term competition and co-operation goals called 'The Agenda', which is designed to provide the players with more *Tropico*-like long-term goals. In our play tests it proved to be a lot of fun stabbing a fellow El Presidente in the back from the other end of the island, so it's obvious that multiplayer can fit in to the specific *Tropico* atmosphere!

With the addition of eras, dynamically changing economies and an expanded battle component, there's no doubt that there are big changes in *Tropico 5*. Is this in part a response to players saying the previous game didn't change enough in the series?

With *Tropico 3* we brought El Presidente and the franchise back to life. With *Tropico 4* we expanded the concept of the game as much as we believed it was feasible, and now *Tropico 5* represents a new cornerstone in the series. We are changing scope and enlarging the game, not only in terms of additional content, but also in

pressing issues just as the general election is rolling around. Crucially though, the sim will show you the results of alienating massive subsets of your island's population, but there's no implied morality associated with these decisions, instead players simply have to deal with the consequences.

All these options were present in previous games, but in this release things have been given further context, with a new era-based mechanic allowing playthroughs to transition through Colonial, World Wars, Cold War and Modern eras, with building styles, technology and the political spectrum evolving as you continue through the decades.

Previous *Tropicos* only took place in the Cold War era, so this change is massive as it means that no longer is your El Presidente considered the best thing since Pina Colodas from the off. Instead your ruler must win independence from the island's imperial overlords



PREVIEW

Tropicans Await Elections

Presidente Tropicans await elections next year. They wish to show their everlasting love and respect for you. They may have used different words, but that does not matter.

What matters is that you have to decide whether to give them elections or not. Also consider which member of your dynasty will run for Presidente.

Preliminary polls show that 59% of the people will vote for you.



Punultimo



Adan Criodias (President)

Celebrity ★

It won't take too long for all this space to be filled up with housing, farms, and angry teamsters.



before he or she can rule with impunity. This has the double effect of offering an easy window for players to do all the necessary stuff like forming a profitable export economy by utilising their island's natural resources, before moving onto the real political wrangling of later eras – most of which is driven towards winning favour from foreign powers.

Lots of developers talk about their game boasting 'layered content', but *Tropico 5* is one of the few games where this claim rings true. The is seen as soon as you start playing, with wannabe dictators at first happy plonking down buildings and connecting roads between them, but after they've mastered that they'll want

"Lots of developers talk about their game boasting 'layered content', but Tropico 5 is one of the few games out where this claim rings true"

some more advanced elements to play with. That's where independence comes in, as after the basics have been formed one of *Tropico's* many political advisors perks up, (yes Punultimo is back!) advising that if revolutionary support is over 50%, he or she

Does your dictator walk around in a full blown space suit? We think not.



can declare independence. So from there you take heed of the helper's advice and free your nation from the shackles of imperialist rule and their strange demands on resources.

After that you choose the founding principles of your nation in a constitution, with the perks of certain conditions explained over others. For example, choose a secular state and your society will be able to research certain technology faster, whereas if you choose the religious option you can easily silence god-fearing factions by plonking down a new church or whatever. But before these constitutional considerations can be made, the thoroughly British-sounding Imperials threaten your unwelcome insurrection with invasion unless you want to pay a whopping \$10,000 to the crown – essentially buying your island nation's freedom.

Now all these thematically huge choices, take place via in-game pop-ups with the

new aspects never before seen in the series. The players' feedback has a ways been important to us as developers of the *Tropico* titles. We understand the responsibility we have to the dedicated *Tropico* fans – yes there are always players who criticise us for not changing the game enough, but then are also those who criticise us for departing too far from the original game and its spirit. We understand both positions but we believe it is the right time for *Tropico* to explore new dimensions. Hopefully the players will think so too.

Do you think your studio is getting braver with every *Tropico*?

El Presidente ordered us to make *Tropico* better, not worse, and under his shining guidance we do so to the best of our abilities. Yes, we are definitely becoming braver under his empowering gaze. Any claims suggesting that we have reservations or lingering fears are nothing more than enemy propaganda and will be treated as such.

Haemimont Games has had its greatest success with the *Tropico* series, yet Kalypso Media has still allowed you guys to experiment with new IP like *Omerta: City of Gangsters* and *The Last Templar*. How important are these breaks from *Tropico* for the creative health of the series and your studio?

Thank you for this wonderful question. We learn something new from every game we make, regardless of its success. Experimenting with new IPs and different genres is always challenging, given our past experience in strategy/simulation games. They also allow the team to detach itself for a while from *Tropico*, to get some fresh air and later return to the game with new perspective. I personally think that the *Tropico* games get better from such breaks and experiments in new directions.

PC-centric series like *Football Manager* are making their way to Vita. Do you think *Tropico* would be a good fit for Sony's handheld?

My first thoughts on the issue are that translating the complexity of any *Tropico* title, not just *Tropico 5*, to the interface restrictions on the Vita would pose quite a challenge. That's not necessarily a negative thing though, it would be an interesting challenge to create a *Tropico* game for the Vita and other handhelds.

***Omerta: City of Gangsters* had a bit of a troubled launch with many users complaining about bugs and the like. Has your studio learnt any lessons from that and is there any wish to return to *Omerta* or the gangster premise in the future?**

The important lesson is that every title, no matter its scope, needs enough time after all the core concepts are implemented to ensure a truly enjoyable gameplay experience for the player. As an example, one of the things we are doing to avoid such a situation with *Tropico 5* is the ongoing closed public Beta for the game. We



PREVIEW

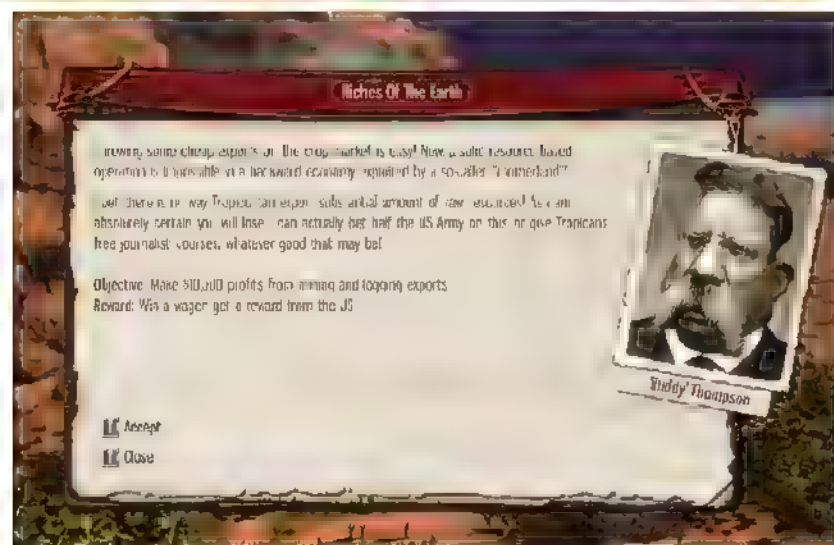


If you don't build enough housing shanty towns will ruin the aesthetics of your otherwise perfect island paradise



plusses and negatives of each option clearly laid out to the player, essentially educating even the most politically ignorant individual to make wise, well-informed selections.

That kind of help continues into the World War era and beyond, with even more helpers both from within and outside your tropical nation lending their insights and opportunities to earn certain perks via missions. For instance, say USA's straight-talking Southern President phones up your nation requesting a specific number of natural resources to be exported to his fertile superpower. If you give him what he wants you'll have the opportunity to choose a reward for your good work, ranging from more funds being flung into the island's investment pot, educated civilians being sent from USA to your port, or private funds being transferred to your own personal Swiss bank account. That objective on its own could be boring, but the missions are delivered with such



Placing roads is still a doddle, with thoroughfares snapping to building entrances

	Ranches	1.4
	Export Cigars	2160/10000
	Join the Allies	
	Send a delegation	
	(18) Ceasefire	

humour and panache via these helpers, that when they do arise (via exclamation points near the Presidential palace) you won't hesitate to click on them, even if you're already at your five mission limit at that particular moment.

Missions help break up the island management gameplay considerably and have the secondary purpose of teaching players the consequences of placing down certain buildings. For instance, adding buildings like taverns, restaurants and opera houses raises the entertainment value for a particular area, which when spelled out is pretty obvious, but if your entertainment rating is low (easily seen by clicking any number of information tabs, tracking civilian thoughts and opinions) this mission usually activates – offering a friendly reminder on how to solve the problem.

That's the kind of layered complexity we're talking about. If you're a good ruler you'll see this mission come up once or

are using an old school Beta, where the game is still in development and the players are directly reporting bugs to us, the developers. We are relying on the support of dedicated gamers to make *Tropico 5* more enjoyable for its audience. As for another *Omerta* title, all our efforts are currently focused on making *Tropico 5* as fantastic as possible.

We were amazed when we played the game that, despite adding a great deal more complexity, the bright and breezy atmosphere of *Tropico* is still alive and well. Was it difficult to sustain that accessible atmosphere in this new game with all the new gameplay mechanics that have been added?

It was a challenge, yet not as much as we thought it would be. This is now the third game we've made for the franchise and we really adore and appreciate the premise and humour of the game, so it naturally remains prominent. Furthermore, we submit every joke we plan to have in the game to the Tropicana Humour Approval Committee, headed by Penjamo. We are satisfied with a joke only after he cannot see the humour in it.

Humour is a core component of *Tropico's* appeal and the fifth game is very, very funny despite the dark subject matter of the player assuming the role of a dictator. Do you recognise the irony there and is it hard to see the line between funny and tasteless at times?

Sometimes we, the designers and script writers, can go too far in certain aspects. However, the feel of *Tropico* is so specific that those jokes immediately stand out. We try to invite as many people as possible from the team to share their opinion on the most acidic jokes. The amazing thing with *Tropico* as a whole is that it has such a specific feel and atmosphere, that people really want to know what kind of crazy new thing we have put into it. Furthermore, *Tropico* can be seen as really politically incorrect and sometimes offensive. We can get away with such things because, in contrast to other videogames, *Tropico* does not take El Presidente, itself or even the player too seriously. This is a major advantage and therefore it's immediately obvious to anyone experiencing the game that it is fair-minded.

Why will this *Tropico* be the best in the series to date?

Tropico 5 is the best instalment in the series because of the new dimensions of gameplay it introduces. The game has new layers of gameplay which when interacting with one another, provide the basis for a dynamic, changing environment which will test your skills as a ruler to the maximum of your abilities. And of course, *Tropico 5* is the best game in the series because El Presidente wanted it so. I want to stress this statement, especially for my commanding Tropicana Secret Service Officer who is proofreading all my public statements, listening to my phone and checking my Twitter feed. ■

I understand you are still struggling with trivial things like money. I will aid you this time, but remember, I offer my help only once.

Money, while it does provide a means to an end, is largely irrelevant in the big picture. It is just a convenience to keep the world in check. Here, have some. Just remember that a man that relies on other people's money quickly becomes their servant. And I have no time for servants.



Accept the money (+\$10,000 Treasury)

Take the money for yourself (+\$10,000 Swiss Bank)

This guy is our favourite advisor, as he sounds a lot like Emperor Palpatine from *Stars Wars* and he has the ear of every leader on the planet – at least that's what he claims



twice during a playthrough, but if you still have problems grasping the importance of mindless entertainment in an island colony, the game will remind you of it in an unobtrusive and charitable manner, which honestly is probably better than you deserve.

The complexity of the game gets substantially deeper as Presidential edicts (essentially temporary policies) come into

play, but that's something that's introduced in a slow manner too, again via missions.

There is a three-stage tutorial which explains all this in plain English, but most management sim veterans will pick up *Tropico's* core components as they go.

WHAT'S ELSE IS NEW?

Now, if you're one of the many who has played a *Tropico* game

WHAT ARE THOSE TROPICANS THINKING?

Like in previous *Tropico* games, players can click on any inhabitant of their fair isle in order to see that individual's recent thoughts, how many dependants they have, their job skills and more. This detailed simulation is typically why the island population is small compared to real-life cities and towns. Nevertheless, it's still entertaining to click on the heads of subjects and see what's rattling around in their tiny brains. There are a litany of stat menus offering up more of this information on mass, but we prefer a more personal touch. Additionally, via this menu players can choose to kill, bribe, banish or discredit that selected individual for a fee. This is the perfect solution for getting rid of faction leaders who disagree with your rule.





Armies, uniforms, signs, and architecture and change as the game transitions from different eras. At first, island forces are fighting with muskets and fluffy collars, but things soon advance to assault rifle and tank warfare, once the World Wars roll around

before you're probably nodding your head in frustration at all this and thinking 'Yes, yes, I know what *Tropico* is! What's different about the fifth game?' Well, if you cool your party pooper jets for five seconds you'll discover that we were just getting to all that.

"A likeable atmosphere which is rather delightful to be a part of"

Ahem, so as we were saying, these missions, well the entire game actually, is dripping in satire about politics with mission dialogue regularly punctuated with swipes at the French, Swiss, Americans, British, Russians, Germans, Bulgarians, Albert Einstein... you name them, they are probably lampooned in some fashion within this game and that, coupled with the bright visuals and samba soundtrack, creates a likeable atmosphere which is rather delightful to be a part

of. Some mission and cinematic content, particularly for disasters, has been borrowed from previous games, but for the most part the joke-ridden dialogue and written material for missions is new.

The campaign itself offers a healthy number of missions which sees players progressing from colonial times to the modern day, with unique goals involving wooing foreign scientists to the American cause by utilising your own dictator's Swiss Bank Account, skimmed from the public purse obviously, to building your army up to withstand multiple invasions from a competing island. A lot of this content is exclusive to the campaign, versus just entering sandbox mode and progressing your island through the eras at your own pace, which finally makes this mode actually worth playing. Sure, some island progress is lost between missions, but that feels like a fitting trade off to take part in these immensely entertaining scenarios.

Continuing the theme of what's new, there just seems





Dock



Teamsters Office



Construction Office



Power Plant



Electric Substation



Parking Lot



Nuclear Power Plant



Metro Station



Geothermal Plant



Road



Demolish

Geothermal Plant

Unlocked in Modern Times

BUILDING A BETTER TROPICO

Buildings are split into 12 different categories in *Tropico 5*, with certain options only unlocking when research has been carried out (dependent on era) and this actually paces out playthroughs in a really satisfying way. Buildings are also still able to be rotated in 30-degree increments in order to maximise space or find the best look for your island.

There are 97 building options in total, ranging from basic ranches to space centres, stadiums, corporate skyscrapers for fashion firms and more obtuse yet enjoyable inclusions. Needless to say there are a lot of options to toy with and these buildings all have different upgrades to choose from as well. Oh, and players can also plonk down multiple types of the same building at one time, by holding down the shift key. Isn't that cool?

more to do in this *Tropico* than in previous iterations, with islands now needing to be explored before you can build on their furthest regions, requiring Presidentes to shell out \$1,000 on expeditions to disperse the restrictive fog, and now managers can be associated with buildings in order to give important facilities a boost.

Much of the game's challenge is still based around balancing tax budgets and building costs, with every facility taking a slice of revenue every year. These costs can be tweaked on a building-by-building basis, but mission bonuses and funding from favoured superpowers can sometimes prop up even the most ill-thought out economy.

NO REGIME IS PERFECT...

There's also a rather half-baked dynasty mechanic within the game as well, with daughters and sons appearing at random

Riches Of The Earth

Throwing some cheap exports on the crop market is easy! Now, a solid resource-based operation is impossible in a backward economy exploited by a so-called 'motherland'!

I bet there is no way Tropicó can export substantial amount of raw resources! As I am absolutely certain you will lose, I can actually bet half the US Army on this, or give Tropicans free journalist courses, whatever good that may be!

Objective: Make \$10,000 profits from mining and logging exports

Reward: Win a wager; get a reward from the US



'Ruddy' Thompson

intervals during a playthrough. Like 'El Prez' himself, these monetary burdens can be customised to the nth degree, with various hats, clothing, glasses and buffs to choose from, but other than making them managers of certain buildings they feel like a superfluous addition to the action. Occasionally they can become useful when certain agent-esque missions come

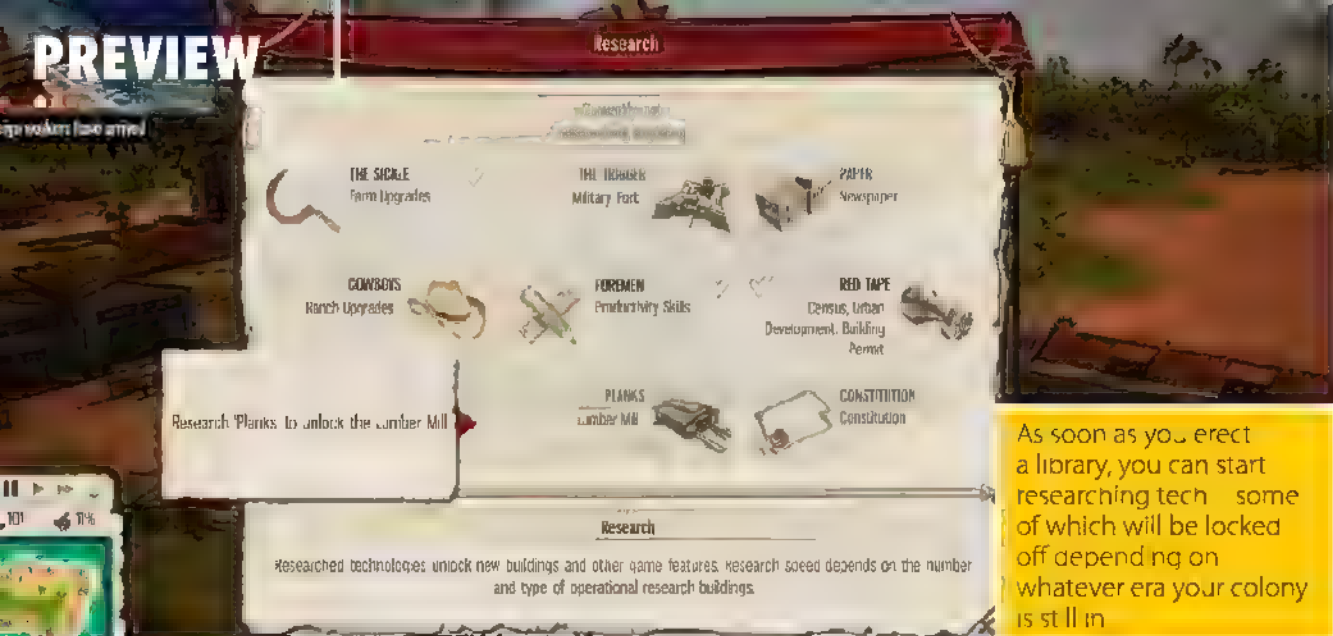
up – for instance sending little Johnny 'Prez' on a meet and greet with a certain Franz Ferdinand to kick off the Great War – but other than those rare occasions, offspring feel about as useful as a third nipple. You can also choose these successors to run in elections rather than your original Presidente, but this doesn't lead the original leader to retire. They simply stick around as the Vladimir Putin to



The space race component doesn't kick in until the Cold War era, and boy howdy are these little flying rockets expensive

PREVIEW

Up workers have arrived



As soon as you erect a library, you can start researching tech—some of which will be locked off depending on whatever era your colony is still in.



sonny jim's Dmitry Medvedev, only the original ruler doesn't age—he or she essentially just waits in the wings until a new mission, building or general election requires marshalling. We don't want to be too harsh on this mechanic, as it is a welcome addition, we just wish it was padded out a bit. For instance,

why can't we send our first born as a sacrifice to one of the more pesky superpowers or failing that marry him or her into a superpower's upper hierarchy to win favour? It isn't what you know but who you know after all!

Additionally, any Swiss bank account money raised can be spent on upgrading the buff



That big opulent building is the presidential palace and the exclamation points around it are missions players can activate at any time. Additionally, if the palace is taken out by protestors or foreign forces our dictator's reign is over.



The overlay menu acts as a useful visual indicator of various systems and topics, including safety, population, freedom, mineral locations, etc.

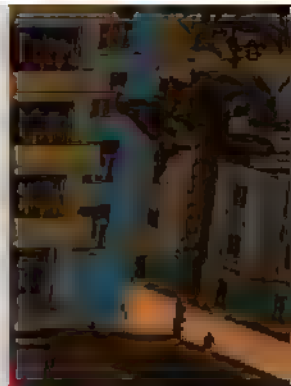
ability of heirs which in turn can make them more useful, and Lord knows this series has needed an actual use for bribes accrued by dictators for a long, long time, but there's definitely room to expand this mechanic further.

The same goes for options when protecting your island from attack as well. Haemimont Games has added more options for recruiting defensive forces via guard towers, bases and even aircraft carriers, but once invaders arrive – triggering a potential endgame state if your Presidential Palace gets taken out – there isn't any means to order soldiers around to target specific enemy squads. Instead tank and platoon squads simply run into each other as mission critical buildings are targeted, with the bigger force always winning out.

Now we aren't saying we'd like a full-blown, real-time strategy component in *Tropico*, but it'd be nice if Presidentes could marshal their forces on the battlefield directly rather than cowering away in their palaces. Sure the

latter scenario is probably more realistic, but for our cigar chomping Ernesto 'Che' Guevara-inspired creation, it didn't quite fit.

Those complaints are the ones that emerge after spending over a dozen hours with the Beta client of this release, and at that point we'd had dozens and dozens of hearty

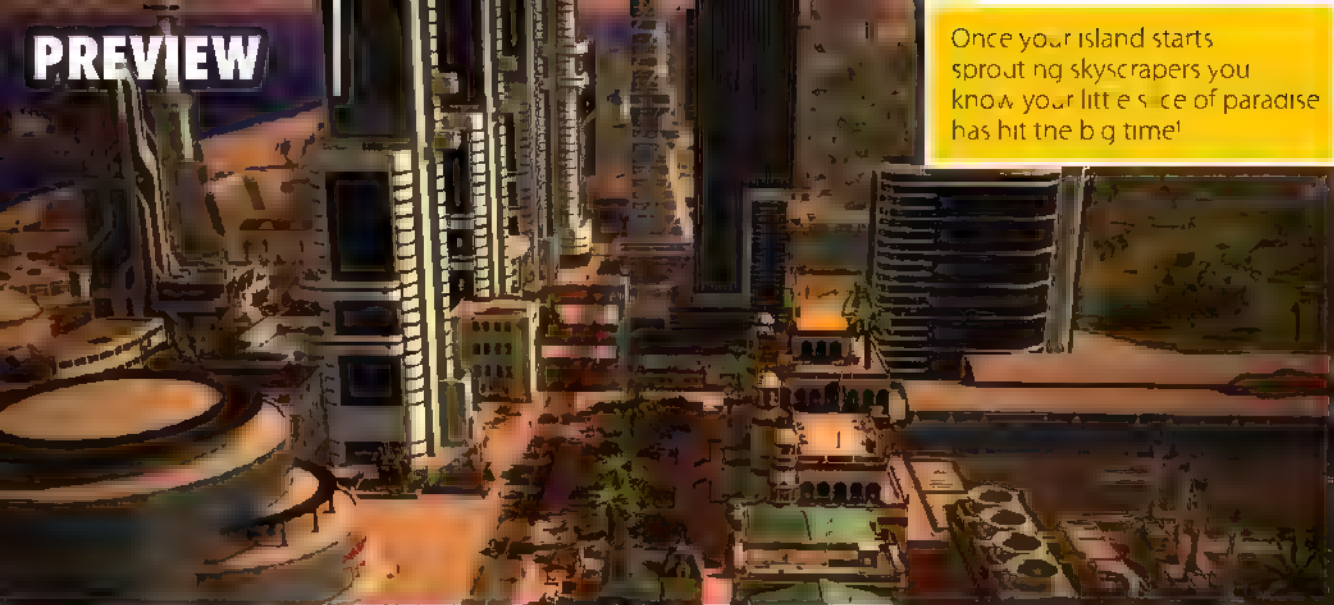


Making the most of your island's natural resources is pretty much the only way to balance the budget consistently via exports, but commodity prices do rise as well as fall.



PREVIEW

Once your island starts sprouting skyscrapers you know your little slice of paradise has hit the big time!



Building management is still the most important role of any dictator in *Tropico*. Here players can hire managers, add upgrades and shut facilities down temporarily of course.

chuckles at the content we played mostly due to the mission dialogue. Frankly, we don't want to spoil any of the jokes in *Tropico* as the game's brilliant caricature portraits, voice-acting and well-written dialogue sell the humour better than we ever could, but they create a play experience which is undoubtedly addictive and enjoyable.

The addition of eras transitioning over multiple centuries, also makes players feel compelled to alter their island's urban centres over time, as the price of maintaining older buildings rises. This solves the problem of what to do once your island paradise is fully explored or gets bloated with buildings. Realistically, your island only really fills up once you hit the Modern era, but this constant need to tear down and build anew always gives players something to think about. Additionally, certain tech only unlocks once certain eras are reached, so playthroughs have a much easier to grasp sense



Thankfully the inhabitants of *Tropico* can look after themselves when it comes to food and sewage concerns, which leaves 'El Prez' free to export anything he or she desires.

Rampage

1/2

Join the Allies

of progression than before. It's impossible, for instance, for your island to unlock space technology in the Colonial era as your library-based researchers will be too busy realising more rudimentary technology, like the humble spade or red tape. All of which unlock

"Tropico is still the funniest management sim on the planet and its latest form only emphasises this fact"

new buildings and ruling options.

The only other big improvement we haven't talked about is *Tropico 5*'s new competitive/co-operative multiplayer component, which sees as many as four dictators all vying for supremacy on the same island. Due to the pre-release nature of the Beta client, we couldn't try out this component, but with different game types and win conditions, it sounds like an

interesting extension of this series' gameplay at least.

After spending a week with *Tropico 5* we have to admit we became rather smitten with its new additions. This sequel solves many of the problems of previous games while expanding the series in all-new yet still undeniably accessible territories.

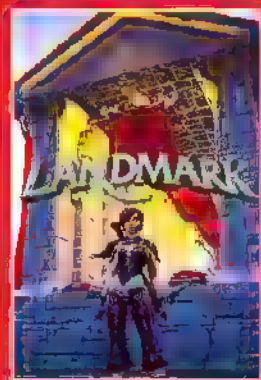
Tropico is still the funniest management sim on the planet and its latest form only emphasises this fact. Yes some of the options available in this game represent some of the most depraved, unjust and downright mean acts a dictator can subject his people to, but there's much more to this intelligent sim than that. *Tropico 5* is political satire at its most welcoming and quite frankly, the world would be a better place if more people played it. Simple as. ■

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LANDMARK

THE PRECURSOR TO EVERQUEST NEXT

EXC
SC

Build your own online paradise, and potentially

You can tell a lot about someone by what they create in an online world free from intervention and restraint. *Landmark* is Sony's similarly voxel-based answer to *Minecraft*, which empowers players to create whatever they wish in a clearly defined plot of land.

With a selection of simple yet powerful building block tools at our disposal, us and other European press had free reign at a recent event to create any architectural feat we wanted in three or so hours, and it was

fascinating to walk around the room and discover what other players were making in their own online plot.

Directly to the right of our own PC running the Beta client, we saw a surprisingly imaginative fellow lay the foundations on his own 18th Century castle (well, that's the time period he told us anyway), while on the left we marvelled in perverse fascination as a fellow journalist finely pruned the pubic hair on his surprisingly detailed, not to say veiny, statue dedicated to the, and we quote, "almighty penis". Right before



EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

ially, much more

our eyes we were witnessing the creative divergence of the gaming audience and the results ranged from the impressive to the slightly

"Smoothing the corners of a couple of blocks to make a fine pair of Mickey Mouse ears"

disturbing, but that's the appeal of *Landmark* (formerly known as *EverQuest Next: Landmark*).

Armed with three different

sized blocks, hollowing out tools, paint schemes, smoothing brush and a really satisfying bridge maker, *Landmark* has a tool set which is powerful enough to create the masterpieces you see on these pages, yet quaint enough that any level of gamer can express themselves by digging into their plot of land, making clandestine sheds or smoothing the corners of a couple of blocks to make a fine pair of Mickey Mouse ears.

Currently this singular build mechanic in *Landmark* is the only aspect of the game that

PREVIEW

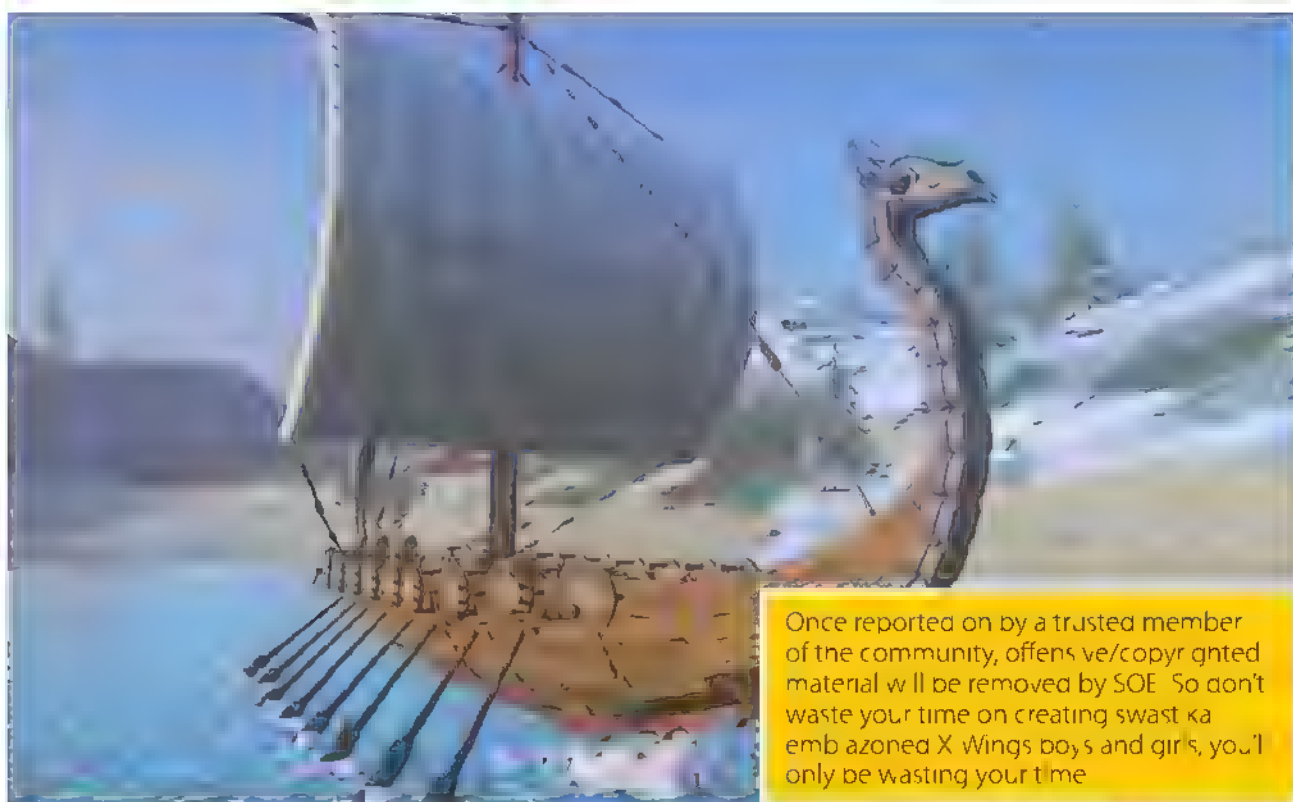


Currently players can't combine their plots together to make villages and towns but that functionality is being talked about within SOE



is near enough finished and it's the first step of SOE's grand plan to make an experience which will prove the testing ground for tech and content which will end up in *Everquest Next*. This is something SOE are really excited about, as they can essentially test toolsets, collect feedback and try out more radical aspects of MMO design without harming the marquee brand of the MMORPG that arguably started it all.

At time of writing, *Landmark* features no combat, loot, quest or A.I. modules but we were told those things are all in the pipeline for future updates. At the moment SOE are putting the final touches to their creation toolset and responding to community feedback which on the one hand involves banning offensive structures from the gameworld while on the other inputting advice from the community on how to make the game better.



Once reported on by a trusted member of the community, offensive/copyrighted material will be removed by SOE. So don't waste your time on creating swastika emblematized X-Wings boys and girls, you'll only be wasting your time.

Future events in *Landmark* will even hold the opportunity for players to produce structures for *EQ Next* which is a novelty few, if any other, MMORPG makers have ever attempted before. Game design by committee if you will.

Now all this may sound pie in

"Future events in *Landmark* will even hold the opportunity for players to produce structures for *EQ Next*"

the sky, but *Landmark* does exist, and even in its current state it's a viable competitor to *Minecraft* in the aspirational architecture stakes. What will be interesting is what *Landmark* morphs into in the future, and if its deep relationship

between *EQ Next* rings true.

With *Landmark* currently only consisting of a network of plots, with players only able to interact with each other by dishing out build permissions for their slice of the landscape, it's clear that more needs to be added to this MMO in order for it to be an experience worth investing in, but those elements associated with questing, NPCs, enemies and combat are coming.

IT MIGHT NOT BE ART

At this point you might be wondering what we produced during that aforementioned hands-on session and the answer to that question depends on your point of view. To us, our plot of land was an accurate recreation of our favourite multiplayer map of all time, Canyon Oasis from *Star Wars: Dark Forces II – Jedi*

A.I. of the creations you see on this page would require not only skill with the creation tools, but also hours and hours worth of hunting for resources

INTRODUCING STORYBRICKS

Prior to our hands-on with *Landmark*, SOE revealed their collaboration with little-known London A.I. developer Storybricks, who are in the process of designing the NPC A.I. for both this release and *Everquest Next*. Why is that so exciting? Well, SOE are touting the tech as the next big evolution of game A.I. with characters swayed by their programmed wants and needs versus a pre-determined flow chart of if 'X' happens, do 'Y' which is the way A.I. tends to work now. Storybrick tech will, according to SOE, lead to more reactive NPC populations which will move around the game world in response to their own motivations, meaning that in one particular week the Ork population might be in one spot whereas the next they may have moved away in search for new food, beer, fights or whatever. Does that sound confusing? My god yes. Do we have any idea how it'll work in practice? Nope, but it's encouraging that at least one developer out there is thinking about NPC behaviour in a way that at least sounds new.

Knight, but if you looked at our work you may have dismissed our customisable landscape as a blocky mess of half-finished caves and flimsy platforms, held together by steel walkways, but then true artistic expression is wasted on some people

Like all sandbox experiences, *Landmark* is only as good as you

"Like all sandbox experiences, Landmark is only as good as you make it"

make it, and if you spend time with the toolkit and hunt for the necessary crafting components from the surrounding area you can create some truly amazing buildings, vehicles, fully erect penis statues or whatever. However if you just want to mess around like an overexcited child in a Play-Doh factory, you can totally do that too.

SOE has big aspirations for

Buildings and vehicle creations don't have moving components at the moment, but players can add smoke and fire animations for effect



Landmark and in turn *EoNext*, enabling players to sell their creations via the in-game store for real money, and more elaborate creation tools associated with combat, quest writing, reactive A.I. and moveable components down the road, but the way the game is at the moment it's hard to gauge how effectively all these elements will tie together. *Landmark* could be one of the most innovative MMORPGs to be released for a generation, but it could also just be another *Minecraft* wannabe. The space between those two realities is considerable and it'll be fascinating to see how SOE can deliver on their, and indeed their players', vision. **C**



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PUB: NCSoft
DEV: CARBINE STUDIOS
LAST GAME: N/A
PLATFORM: PC
TBA: 3RD JUNE

TWITTER



@Wildstar

So who had fun on Nexus this weekend? Did you take any screenshots? Share them with us and include #WildStar



@ZybakTV

#Wildstar Hoverboard, Skatepark made out of tables on top of player house. <http://youtu.be/8UGHV3nPE>



@Angelina

Quick tutorial about where to get/put your character creation codes in #Wildstar - <http://tumblr.co/ZoKpppiALcaMti>



@Gaminggoodness

Watch me lose my sh*t messing around with @Wildstar's housing. A house fit for Trunkbutt.

TWEET US @GAMERZINES

Putting PvP in its rightful place

We suck at PvP – there isn't any other way to put it, and you know what? It isn't from a lack of trying. We've spent hours with *Guild Wars 2*'s world versus world battles, *World of Warcraft*'s Arena PvP, *TERA*'s deathmatch system and *The Old Republic*'s Warfronts, yet for some reason they just haven't grabbed us – be it due to impenetrable tactics, bloated player count or our rather pooppy nature, we just weren't interested in taking part in more than just a few matches in each game type. So when Carbine Studios contacted us to request our involvement in an intercontinental PvP match pitting Europe's MMO journalists versus North America's on *Wildstar*'s starter Battleground, Walatiki Temple, we knew without any shadow of a doubt that we were going to thoroughly let down our EU brethren. Worse than that, they even put us in the pivotal role of Healer in a 10 versus 10 match exacerbating our potential for an embarrassing fail.

Thankfully, *Wildstar*'s take on PvP isn't anywhere near as alienating as other MMORPGs. As long-time fans of *Unreal Tournament*, *Quake III* and *Team Fortress 2*, we were more than comfortable on Walatiki Temple due to the map's Capture the Flag-inspired gameplay tropes, familiar class roles and the game's live action targeting system.

Here's how matches on Walatiki shake down: each team has their own base at opposite ends of the map, and each player has the task of capturing masks which spawn every 60 seconds in one of four points in the middle of the map. The first team to capture five masks wins, but crucially masks can be stolen once captured, so the balance of battle is all about attacking the



"Thankfully, Wildstar's
take on PvP isn't anywhere
near as alienating as
other MMORPGs

PREVIEW



You'd probably be moody too if people kept stealing your masks!

mask spawns while not leaving your team's base undefended. Even self-confessed PvP losers like ourselves can grasp that kind of tactical nuance, and as you'd expect, teams that talk with one another are in a far better position to succeed than those

who don't.

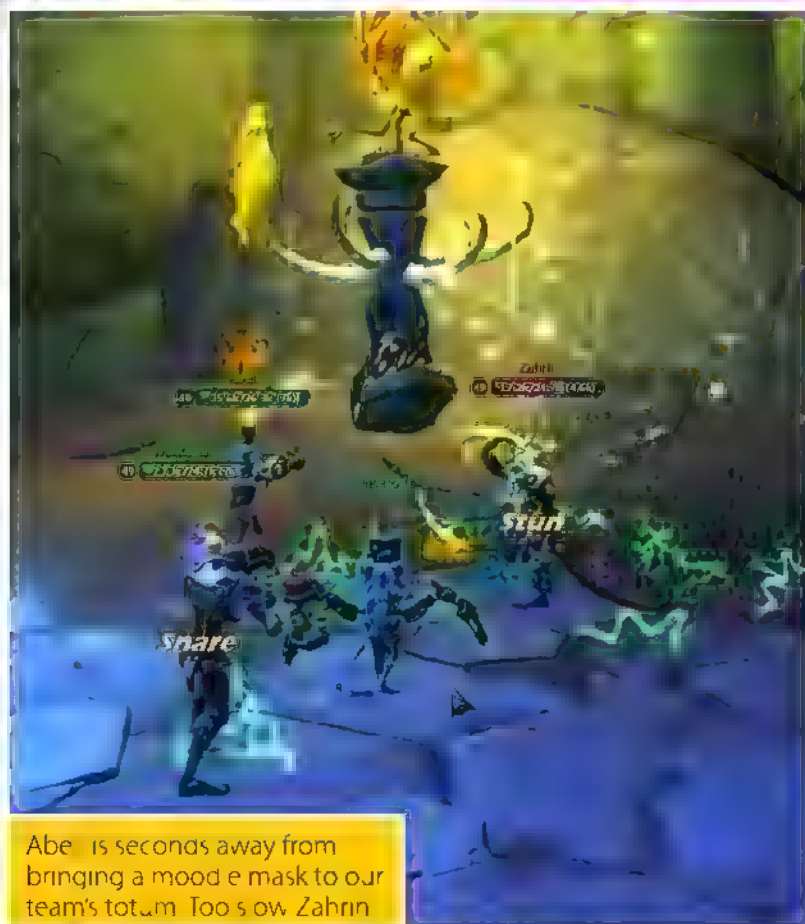
This was clear to us within the first of five matches, with team-mates screaming for help and assistance, of which we could easily supply with our armour-buffing skills, health-spewing Chinese lanterns





and encouragingly green AoE telegraphs. We had a few attacks we could play with, including a rather nifty eagle rush skill which rooted any character that was unfortunate enough to get hit with a face full of feathers, but other than that we were an out-and-out support machine – making anyone within 12 metres of our small Aurin form seemingly invincible, thanks to our health-regen abilities, unless of course we were outnumbered by the enemy.

Delegating heals was simply a case of targeting allies directly or utilising group heal skills which became available as our Esper class was attacked, translating damage taken into a momentum-granting resource. Hell, we were even grabbing masks and running them to our base ourselves, thanks to our health buffing



Abe is seconds away from bringing a mood e mask to our team's totum Too s ow Zahrin

PREVIEW

Don't let the fuzzy appearance fool you, these Dominion folk are a very effective team!



abilities, making us the perfect scout for sniffing out masks and bringing them back to the totem, easily brushing off the three to five man enemy team chasing after our golden-armoured form.

Now for us, the most anti of anti-PvPers, to grasp all that depth in a matter of matches proved very impressive and shows that *Wildstar's* form of PvP is very

accommodating indeed.

Matches lasted between 10 to 25 minutes, depending on how many masks were stolen and captured, and the rewards both in terms of XP and Prestige (a currency used to purchase gear and loot) seemed plentiful.

Carbine even told us that it is possible to level a character from level 6 to cap (level 50) purely via PvP and they think this could be a favoured option for a small yet significant contingent of players.

Walatiki Temple unlocks at level 6 and is one of two Battlegrounds *Wildstar* will boast at launch – the other being the attack/defend based Halls of the Bloodswarm (unlocks at level 14), but we suspect both maps will offer a welcome introduction to *Wildstar's* PvP component. This release does have more hardcore competitive options however, such as the ELO-rated 2 vs 2, 3 vs 3, or 4 vs 4 Arena matches and 40 vs 40 Warparty



Don't worry Abe I, we've got your back. Well, we would if we had any charges left



Any attempt to capture a mask is immediately halted as soon as the capturer's damaged. That's why if not captured quickly, battles over masks can genuinely last minutes at a time

skirmishes which involve two teams attempting to take down each other's customised base, referred to more commonly as a Warplot. The likelihood is we won't feel ready to get involved with any of that stuff at launch, but there's no doubt that Battlegrounds has been designed as an entry drug to more hardcore competitive cravings, so who knows?

In a matter of hours *Wildstar* managed to wash away a lot of our misgivings about competitive gaming in MMORPGs and that dear friends is something that's definitely worth celebrating. ■

WILDSTAR'S Beta Schedule

- Friday, April 18th
through Sunday, April 20th

- Friday, May 2nd
through Sunday, May 4th

- Open Beta plans confirmed,
but not dated as of yet.

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prices and offers now!

PREVIEW

HEAT

1

2



QUANTUM RUSH

PREVIEW



PUB DEV
LAST GAME
PLATFORM
TBA

F-Zero Online

You can't keep a good developer down; you really can't. Even when the world seems to tell them in no uncertain terms to move onto a new project, a rare number of studios out there will keep going regardless, committed to delivering their vision come hell or high water, and that's GameArt Studio's *Quantum Rush*. The free-to-play online racer, which channels the likes of Sony Liverpool's sadly deceased *Wipeout* series and Nintendo's increasingly forgotten *F-Zero* franchise, was one of Kickstarter's most surprising failures last year when the Berlin outfit behind the game managed to raise only \$5,463 of their \$100,000 funding goal. Many developers would have been discouraged by this virtual kick to the balls, but not GameArt. They continued developing their prototype, managing to take the game into Open Beta earlier this year and, surprisingly, the future-combat racer is actually shaping up pretty well.

Over the past month we've spent hour upon hour with *Quantum Rush*, and while it's clear that the game is nowhere near as polished as the two franchises its development is clearly inspired by, there is a good racing experience here and one that is getting better every single month.

Total 00:44.8

Lap 00:43.8

Best 00:00.00

FirstLook | Preview

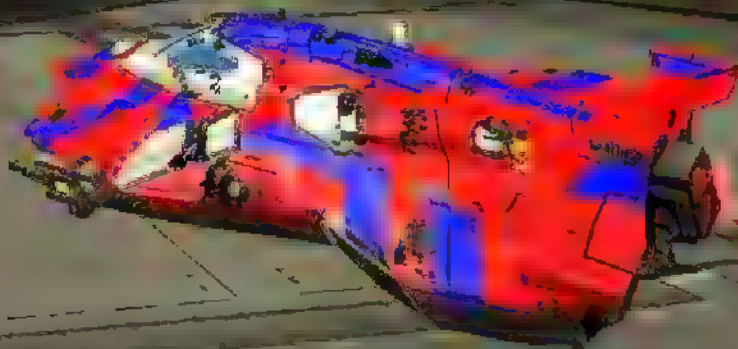
"Many developers
would have been
discouraged by this virtual
kick to the balls, but
not GameArt"

ENERG

9

14

14



876 km/h

SPEED

PREVIEW

Pick ups follow a standard design: shield, projectile, blind smoke, etc



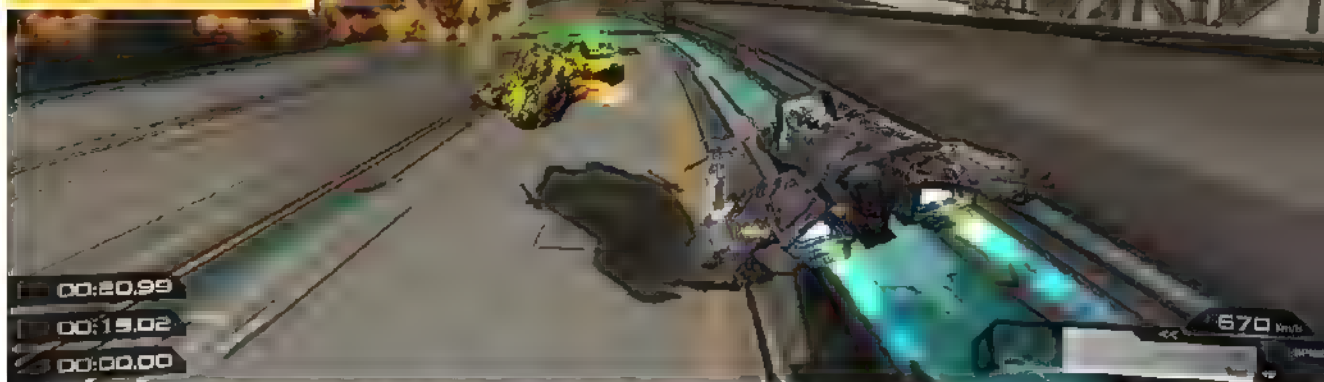
The premise behind this racing MMO is simple: You're a driver/pilot taking part in a high-octane near-future racing championship, where competitors can fire rocket power-ups while driving in hover cars that reach speeds of up to 900 kilometres per hour.

Events take place on tracks that no mere mortal could tame

yet somehow you and 19 other maniacs are doing exactly that in vehicles that explode if they overheat from overboosting, hit any scenery or get hit by ordinance from competitors. None of this is original, but that doesn't make it any less fun when you put on your airbrakes to sling your garishly coloured angular



Regardless of race type Battle or Speed competitors can still muscle each other off course



vehicle around corners, narrowly pass through boost pads or traverse through any number of tricky chicane sections.

QR's on-track action feels fast, fluid and immediate, which is impressive for any kind of online-only experience and when you're in the heart of the pack it's hard to not feel excited by what you're playing, even as you get taken out.

Quantum Rush is quicker than any online game has any right to be and there's already a very solid foundation for a really strong experience here, but unfortunately that's being hamstrung by a dearth of actual content. Currently there are only two tracks in the game, Airport and Coastal, and the upgrade mechanic for vehicles is utterly half-baked – only offering a handful of different rides to choose from.

That will change over time and to be fair, GameArt has added bot support and greatly enhanced blur visuals to properly communicate a sense of speed during races. Unfortunately though, all this still leads to servers

feeling very underpopulated, as we were only able to find a race for 12 human racers (bolstered out by AI) at peak times, and there's a real big problem that outside of racing there isn't much to do in the game. Sure you can upgrade craft and customise paint schemes, but all that seems like something of an afterthought at the moment.

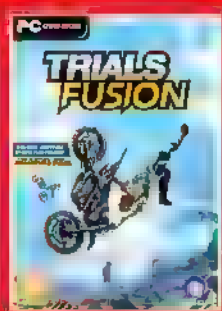
Nevertheless it still seems strange to us that *Quantum Rush* isn't a bigger deal. As a pick-up-and-play racer it's fun and engaging and it has all of the hallmarks you'd expect of a slimmed-down version of *Wipeout*. Maybe the assumption of publishers is accurate and that the time for sci-fi combat racers is over, but whatever the case, we have no doubt that GameArt will continue implementing their vision for the maligned genre regardless. Good on ya guys! ■

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TRIALS FUSION

HANDS-ON PREVIEW



PUB: UBISOFT
DEV: REDLYNX
LAST GAME:

PLATFORM:

TECH: JBA

TWITTER



TrialsGames

We are drawing the final curtain on Trials Fusion. Watch the final trailer for www.ubisoft.com/trialsfusion now!



TrialsFusion

Ubisoft's most ambitious motorcycle game. Fusion is coming out this month!



BenBarrow

Ubisoft's most ambitious motorcycle game. Fusion is coming out this month!



Zerkano

Beta on PC at the moment! Check out the game on YouTube for some good videos!

TWEET US @GAMERZINES

Flung into the far future... literally!

See that blurry dot on the opposite page? Yeah that's us trying to tackle one of *Trials Fusion's* more daring courses. Actually that's a lie, it isn't a daring course at all it's actually one of the earliest challenges in a game which casually demands players fly, flip and vault through massive environments on a myriad of ever-reliable motocross bikes.

Fusion is based on the peculiar real-world *Trials* discipline which involves riders trying to get their bikes to the most absurd of places, but while the real-life discipline takes place in arenas laden with JCBs, tyres and hoardings emblazoned with energy drink advertisements, *Fusion* takes place in a bizarre universe where ramps line the countryside, building sites and power stations. It's a strange world to be sure, but one that is endlessly entertaining, with *Trials'* gameplay coming under the racer turned platformer heading, asking players to lean their rider at just the right point in order to pull off massive jumps, loop-de-loops or more pedestrian backflips.

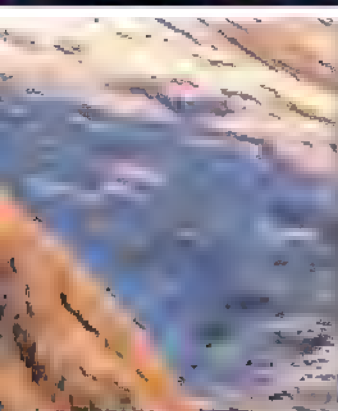
The truth is, even though Redlynx has moved their series into the far flung future starring confused AI tutorial ladies and bizarre rockets, the basic *Trials* gameplay has remained the same. The camera still zooms around your rider as you fling the unfortunate helmeted one through levels and when you propel the poor soul off into the distance, the result is still as vince-educing as it is hilarious.

The differences between *Trials Fusion* and its successor *Evolution* are subtle, but they are here. For example, now players have the option to complete optional challenges for each of the game's tracks, ranging from performing 10 flips before the finish line to the distinctly more obtuse 'press the red button'. Complete all of these challenges and you win points to spend on customising your bike and rider. Challenges are just a way of giving players something to do other than get their rider from point A to B as fast as possible, and while silly they do this task admirably.



Fast Forward

Slow and steady doesn't win any races in *Trials*. Trust us, we tried.



In previous *Trials* games we weren't too fussed about the environments whizzing past our rider, but these challenges have changed that. Deciphering objective clues gives the game an almost puzzle-like quality, which adds a layer of complexity that was completely lacking before.

Additionally, *Fusion* will also be the first game in the series to allow players to utilise four-wheeled buggies as well as bikes to tame levels which, we imagine, will add a different slant to the game. There's also a new tricks system which allows riders to perform grabs, transitions and the like – expanding the control



ROACH
WHEELS

Shuriken

\$1,800

Blade

\$2,200

BETA PLAYTHROUGH



Riders can still customise the bikes and suits to an obsessive degree



scheme beyond simply leaning forward or backward, accelerating and braking.

Sadly the Beta client we sampled didn't include any of these new features, with multiplayer also conspicuously absent, but from the dozen or so levels we sampled we can tell you that *Trials Fusion* is just as engaging and accessible as previous games, with track runthroughs feeling fast and reckless while providing absurdly good fun.

Ubisoft and Redlynx have gotten the release timing for this new *Trials* game down to a T, with this new iteration launching at just the right time. It's been two years since we last obsessed over a *Trials* game, but from our experiences with *Fusion*, it seems as though our yearnings to soar higher than sanity suggests while strapped to a bike remain as strong as ever. ■

Bikes still feel satisfyingly weighty and take a few seconds to right properly



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PARMAGEDDON REINCARNATION

THE RETURN OF THE ORIGINAL BAD BOY RACER



It's amazing to think that this kind of casual car-related violence was even a big deal back then, but a tabloid-fuelled frenzy led to the original and its sequel *Carpocalypse Now* gaining lots of negative headlines in a new wave of 'Video Game Nasties', yet both

That's all in the past though, as now the series has returned in *Carnageddon: Reincarnation*. The latest iteration of the series, fuelled by over \$625k in Kickstarter investment, has arrived on Steam's Early Access program, and by all accounts the part sequel/part remake is an encouraging base for *Stainless* to build upon.

"The client is very pre-Alpha," Stainless Studio's co-founder Neil 'Nobby' Barnden told us, reflecting on the benefits of Early Access in a meet-up at Rezzed.

"The good thing is that we get feedback from a lot of people early on, so that enables us to just basically hotfix the game every couple of days addressing responses from players."

Since the Early Access version





The first game in this series, released in 1997, is still fun to go back to even today. Stainless put out a rather excellent port of it last year too, for iOS and Android.

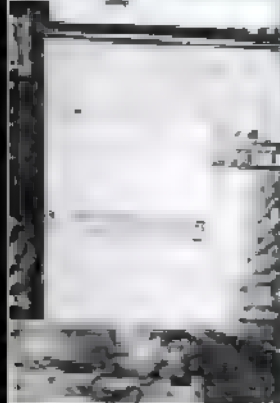


Patrick Buckland (left) was lead designer of *Carmageddon 1* and *2*, while Neil Barnden (right) was lead artist on both games. They both founded Stainless Games to make the kind of games they wanted to play way back in 1993.

launched at the end of April, *Reincarnation* has seen multiple updates substantially improving performance and adding new content, but it's very clear that this game is still clearly unfinished with multiple warnings indicating as such, encouraging players to report any bugs they encounter via www.carmageddon.com/bugger. There are even percentages next to track and car choices to clearly signify to fans how unfinished certain aspects of the game are. This highlighting of unfinished content is in stark contrast to what developers do for full releases and allows smaller studios like Stainless to earn revenue for games which are

white company of
Software
Tasta
"We don't think it's
large — it's too over-
for people to take seri-
she said.
The spokeswoman

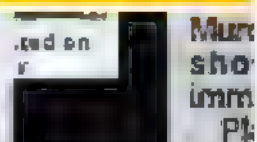
Stop this



BAN DEATH GAME NOW POPE

MP brands it 'utterly

The hysteria around
Carmageddon raised
the stature of the
games medium, in
the UK at least, to a
whole other level



ers have call to ban Cui

puter c
es out

clearly still in development. That
may sound like a bad thing, but
it allows fans to see games that
they care about evolve, offering
a realistic view of how projects
progress over time. Essentially
fans aren't buying into just
the game, they're buying into
the journey associated with
development which is a sentiment
Stainless are more than happy to
encourage.

"As people see the additional
content coming along in the
updates, in really nice tangible
increases in content with new
gameplay modes, they'll want to
get involved. The biggie will be
multiplayer, when that's stable
enough to actually include in the
build that'll make a big difference,"
Nobby told us.

The Early Access build currently
includes four tracks and eight cars
housed in a kind of quick race
mode, with career and multiplayer
options to be added later.

"We're planning to add

online multiplayer in a really nice
significant update, after PAX
East (April), but before E3 (July)."
revealed Stainless' publishing
director, Jason Garber.

"Prior to us adding multiplayer,
fans will have been playing the
game for four or so weeks, and I
think this feature will definitely add
more sales. It's very rewarding for
fans to see a game grow as they
follow a project."

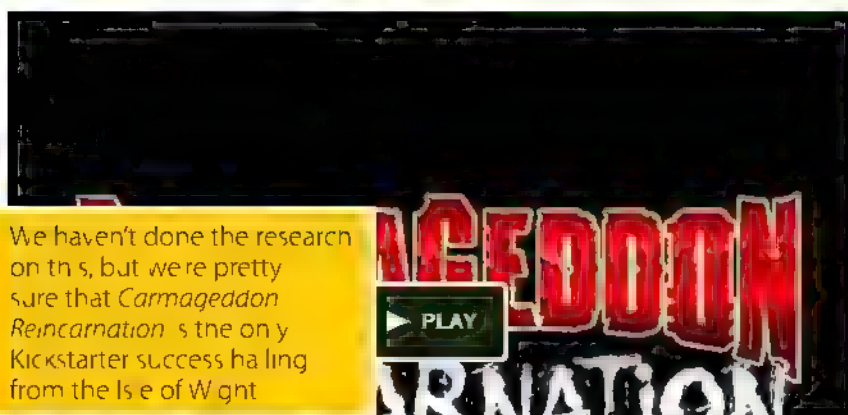
The studio's plans have
already been reigned in by
their supporters following an
announcement last year that
backers would have to plump
down further cash on DLC for
Reincarnation despite funding the
game's creation via Kickstarter — a
policy which was immediately
rescinded as Stainless felt the full
brunt of a community backlash.
It's these lessons which Stainless
as a company has been learning
all the time, and according
to Garber this near-constant
communication with fans is key

by Stainless Games

Home Updates 00 Backers 00 Comments 00

Location of Weight UK Video Games

This project was successfully funded on Jun 7, 2012



15,736

backers

\$625,143

pledged of \$400,000 goal

0

seconds to go

We haven't done the research on this, but we're pretty sure that *Carmageddon Reincarnation* is the only Kickstarter success hailing from the Isle of Wight

in keeping everyone engaged and the game itself moving forward.

"Early Access is really a two-sided coin, as it can work for you and it can work against you. You've seen titles where the public response to certain games has been very negative. With *Carmageddon* the Early Access response has been very positive. There was one negative initially associated with the [required] specs and they've come down, and we're working on those very hard," he explained.

Carmageddon is actually a perfect fit for both crowdfunding and Early Access. This series' spirit has always been anti-establishment and Stainless themselves seem to view the world in a slightly different perspective to other developers.

What other explanation is there for a racing experience that includes the terms 'Twatted' and power-ups like the Repulsifactor? We absolutely love that about

them, and now *Carmageddon* is back in their hands, the future is looking brighter and brighter for the series, especially now that the controversy that hounded the first release seems quite quaint.

"Well, we wouldn't mind *Reincarnation* being controversial a tiny bit. Just in the fact that it gets the *Carmageddon* name out there again, which would upset people and that would be funny in its own way," Nobby enthused with an unmistakably cheeky grin on his face.

It sounds like Stainless needs to raise their game when it comes to offending people, don't you think Nobby?

"No, because when people talk about raising their game, they talk about it in terms of nastiness and that was never what we were about. *Carmageddon* was all about being funny, and we need to raise our game in terms of making it even funnier and that's what we're trying to do by



Carmageddon 2: The Reckless Engine Now came out in 1998, only a year after the original game, sporting an all-new 3D graphics engine. Some on the *FirstLook* staff have vivid memories of begging their parents for a 3DFX card, in order to get angular visuals you see here.

offering more of the 'Oh f***ing hell, did you see that?!' sort of moments - that's where we need to be. We always had that expectation that we can do all the usual shit that we want to do, and as long as that shit is funny we're succeeding, basically."

Due to our tender age at the time, the tongue-in-cheek facade of *Carmageddon* was lost on us back then, as we just obsessed over the ability to run over pedestrians or green-blooded zombies (our mum and dad wouldn't let us download the patch), but when reflecting on *Carmageddon* now, it's hard to disagree with the series' co-creator. Yes *Carmageddon* is crass, violent and silly, but it's actually harmless as well.

"There have been things that have been speculated on, like do we call power-ups certain offensive names, and we have actually reigned ourselves back on one or two occasions and



Nobby might have aged a few years' since that picture on the previous page, but that hasn't made him any less committed to the *Carmageddon* cause, as this behind-the-scenes shot from the original Kickstarter pitch video for *Reincarnation* shows.

Reincarnation is in many ways a remake of the first *Carmageddon*, even boasting the same levels as the original.



thought, 'no we don't need to caught controversy. You know, think of a funny name rather than a name that makes you go 'oooh'."

Stainless are unique in the gaming landscape and rather aloof as well, having quietly gathered acclaim with the videogame series based around *Magic: The Gathering* for the past four years, a license they are now prohibited from working on or even talking about.

Carmageddon though is the only series where the developer can really put across their crass, funny and rather anarchic side. We asked Jason and Nobby where these attributes hailed from, subtly inferring that the studio's Isle of Wight home had something to do with it, and their answer wasn't quite what we expected.

"I think it's Nobby and Patrick [Buckland, the other Stainless co-founder] themselves. I've worked at various companies and I'm always amazed that Nobby

and Patrick are like an extension of each other. They both have the same humour and the same level of intelligence. Nobby is the oracle of *Carmageddon*, and in the same way Patrick is as well, and that's almost more important than being in the Isle of Wight," Jason explained.

"What happened in 1997 for the first game and 1999 for the second title is exactly what is happening now – it's a rekindling of that spirit. A lot of people who left the company actually came back for *Reincarnation* and that's shining through in the AI and lots of other things," he added.

It's that spirit that people are falling in love with again, and why the series has remained an important cultural touchstone for gaming, a decade after its heyday.

A certain breed of nostalgics are hungry for a new *Carmageddon*, as seen with the mobile version's three million in sales, and with Stainless now moving into the



publishing arena to eliminate what Jason calls the dangers of "work for hire" being a "dead end", they are taking control of their own destiny like so many other independent developers through public funding, Early Access and more open platforms. The ease of accessing PC and mobile markets is allowing the small 50-man studio to stretch their legs into the publishing scene, following the likes of Tim Schafer's Double Fine, which should give them the freedom and the scope to produce more *Carmageddon* games and other titles besides.

Seeing as Nobby was sat next to us though, we couldn't help but ask a few questions on what will happen post-*Reincarnation* for this series and it seems those plans are unsurprisingly still up in the air.

"We're rebuilding the *Carmageddon* brand."

Reincarnation is essentially a remake and a stepping stone for the next title. What could the next game be? We don't know... yet."

Could a console release be on the cards? *Reincarnation's* engine Beelzebub is DirectX-11 and fully optimised for use on Xbox One and PlayStation 4, and Jason told us that Stainless' relationships with both Sony and Microsoft are good.

Time will tell, but with the Early Access build of *Reincarnation* constantly improving and the growing audience hungry for new updates, it appears *Carmageddon* hasn't only been revived it's damn near flourishing. Look out grannies, Max is back at the wheel! ■

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GAME ON

DLC & UGC Round-Up

Grand Theft Online: Heists

DLC

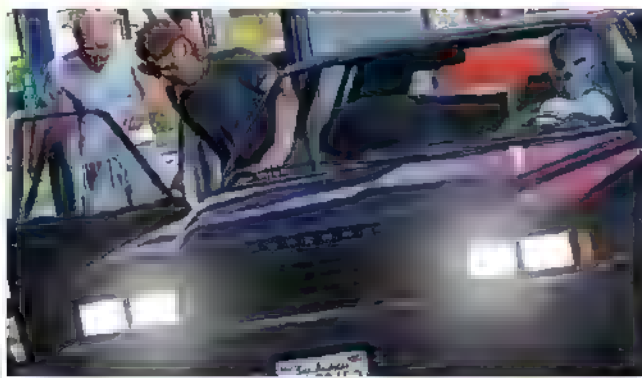
PUB: Rockstar Games

DEV: Rockstar North

TBA: Summer

Rockstar are continuing to add more content to their multiplayer component for *Grand Theft Auto V*. This month they confirmed a new timetable of releases including the *High Life* update which will allow players to own more symbols of excess including fast cars and two apartments, and the Capture Creator which allows players to start creating their own races, deathmatch maps and capture jobs. All this content will arrive this spring, whereas the really exciting addition – the ability for players to complete heist

missions for one another and their scores to be tracked via scoreboards online – will arrive this summer. If you traded in *GTA V* earlier this year, you might want to buy another copy to get back online. ■



Guild Wars 2: April Feature Pack

DLC

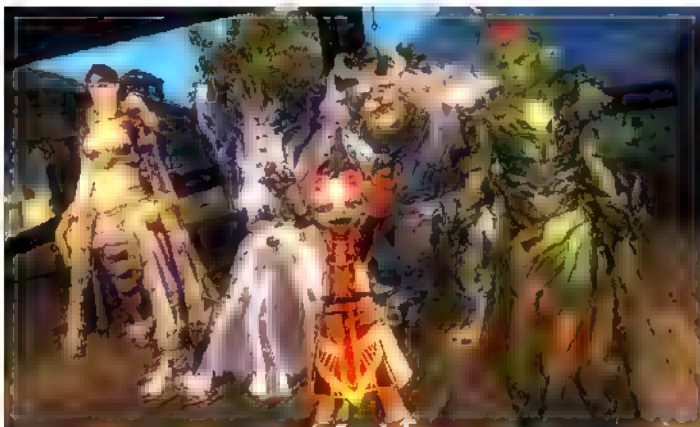
PUB: NCSoft

DEV: ArenaNet

OUT NOW

ArenaNet has finally unleashed their massive feature update for *Guild Wars 2* amending, expanding and tweaking

core attributes of their MMO from server structure to character customisation. Those annoying overflow shards are now a thing of the past, enabling the world to feel much more alive with players, and the complicated skill rune system has been simplified, enabling roles to be switched on the fly. Also, exotic weapon and armour skins are now account-bound, meaning players can switch them between alts. All in all, if this one-time-fee MMORPG didn't float your proverbial boat before, the likelihood is it just might now. ■



Left 4 Dead 2: Red vs Blue

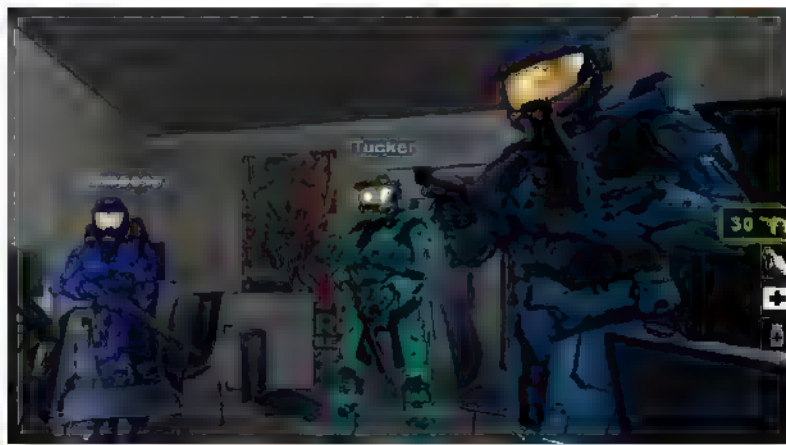


DEV: Emperor Doom
FIND IT: <http://tiny.cc/mjcn4d>
OUT NOW

Now this is the sort of game mash-up that gets us really excited! The Red vs Blue squad of Sarge, Griff, Simmons, Donut, Church, Tucker, Caboose and Tex make their way into Valve's zombie shooter *Left 4 Dead 2*, and it's up to you to decide who of the lovable troop survives.

Essentially this mod just places eight different expertly recreated *Halo* armours into the game, but the thought is there. Unfortunately sound files from Rooster Teeth's cult YouTube

series has yet to make its way into this mode, but we have our fingers crossed that'll be coming soon. First one to teamkill Caboose wins the zombie apocalypse! ■



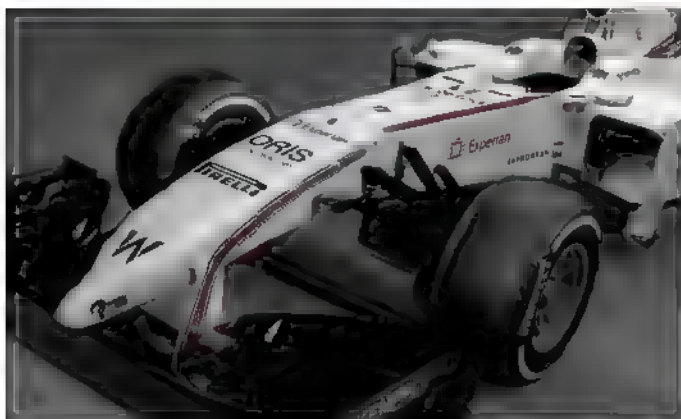
rFactor: Mod VFR F1 2014



DEV: Virtual FrancePacing
FIND IT: <http://tiny.cc/mjcn4d>
OUT NOW

Formula One has been shaken up big time this year. V8 engines are out replaced by 1.6 litre V6-Turbos, blown

diffusers have been outlawed and rear and front-wing regulations have been altered significantly – all of which contributes to the biggest shake-up in the sport's 70-year history. Codemasters are currently developing *F1 2014* for release later this year – we'd imagine for PC and next-gen consoles – but if you can't wait that long, an intrepid French mod team has already reproduced all the cars, drivers, liveries and engine sounds in a new rFactor mod. Obviously Codie's work will be far superior to this mod, but it'll do for the time being. ■



Betas and Early Access

Krautscape



PUB: *Midnight City*
DEV: *Mario von Rickenbach*
OUT NOW

What's faster travel by air or by land? That's a question only a stupid person would ask to be honest, but this new multiplayer racer from Mario Von Rickenbach (officially the best name in the world) might just throw in a few new elements to consider. *Krautscape* is the only racing game on the planet which allows players to transition between air and land vehicles on a whim, with tracks that are procedurally generated as the pack tours around them. Strange, right? Absolutely, but it doesn't

make this unique indie release any less intriguing. *Krautscape* also has a killer soundtrack to boot! ■



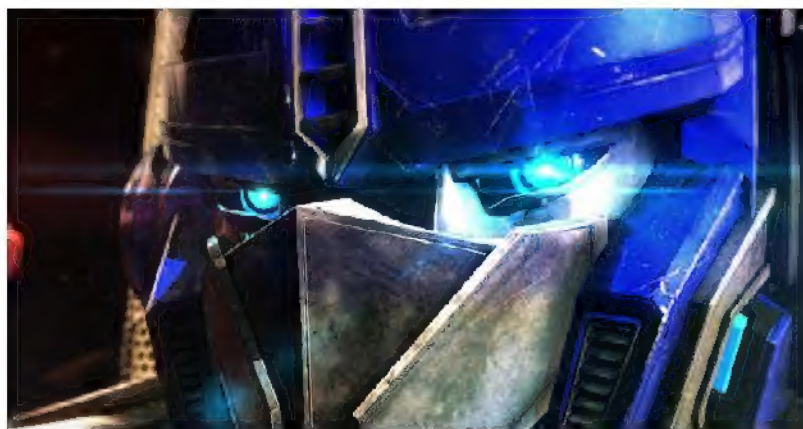
Transformers Universe



PUB: *Jagex*
DEV: *In-house*
ETA: TBA

If you're a fan of *Transformers*, you know the Michael Bay variety rather than the classic kids cartoon show, you'll be pleased to

hear that Jagex's next free-to-play MMO *Transformers Universe* is accepting even more closed Beta applicants (currently at over 400,000) this month.



The kid-friendly release went down a treat at Birmingham's Gadget Show earlier in the month and by all accounts it seems development is continuing rather well. As long as we can make a character that can transform into a VW Beetle we'll be very, very happy. ■

Dead Island: Epidemic

BETA

PUB: Deep Silver
DEV: Shunlock Studios
ETA: Summer

Deep Silver's cult zombie genocide-'em-up is expanding into all-new territory. *Epidemic* is a MOBA in a similar vein to Valve's *DOTA 2* and Riot's *League of Legends*, with three teams attempting to protect capture points on maps accommodating both fellow survivors and various members of the zombie horde. Rather than using mouse-targeting, players control their heroes in *Epidemic* directly with an elaborate array of combo weapons to wreck havoc with the competition's fleshy faces. How about a cactus nailed to the end of a broom

handle or a shotgun with a chainsaw sellotaped to the barrel? Yep this is *Dead Island* alright, only with a more colourful art style and the cutest giblets this side of *Team Fortress 2*. ■



Hawken

EAC

PUB: Meteor
Entertainment
DEV: Adhesive Games
OUT NOW

When it comes to mechs in games, all anyone is talking about at the moment is *Titanfall*. The thing is,



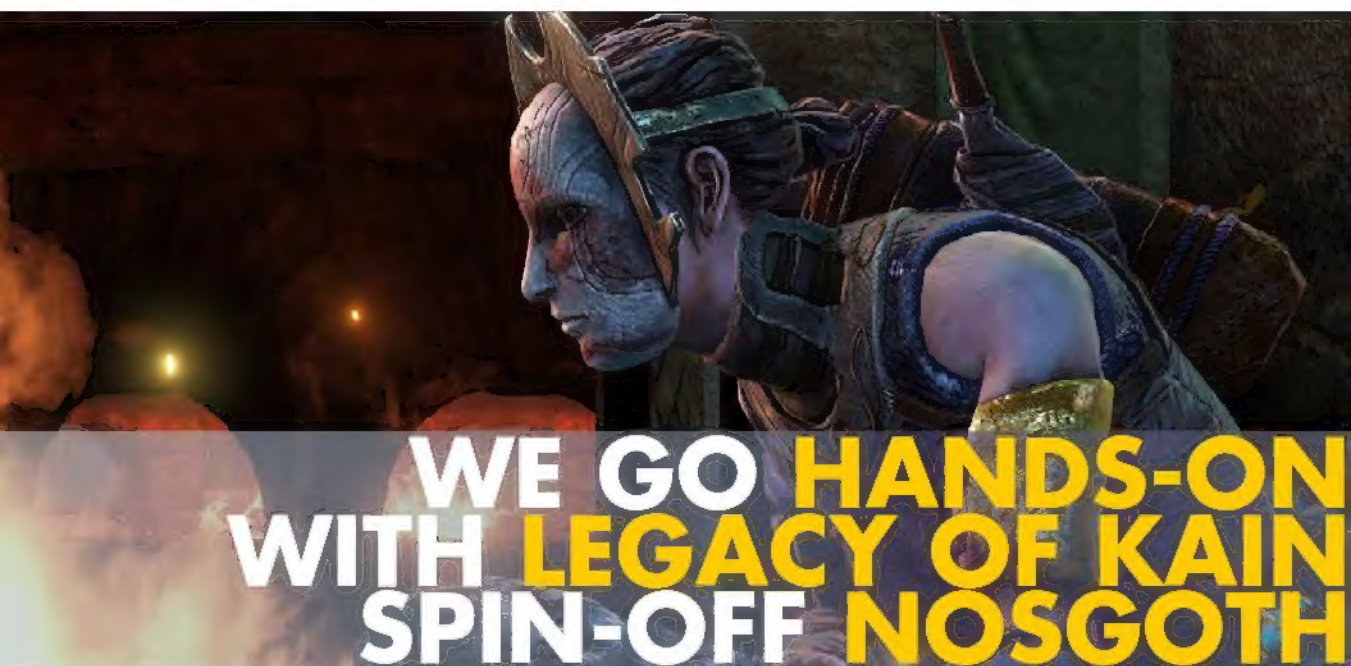
Respawn Entertainment's shooter wasn't the first to boast walking battlefield tanks and it certainly won't be the last, and arguably the free-to-play shooter *Hawken* makes much more of that enticing concept. Here there isn't any time to get out of the mech and walk around, instead all combat takes place in your multi-storey mechanical monstrosity. There's the ability to customise your mech both inside and out, and there's a multitude of different match types to vary up the 6 vs 6 action. *Hawken* is now available on Steam and still has its fair share of bugs, but that should change as the game stomps towards release. ■

ISSUE 16

NEXT MONTH



SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER?
WE TAKE **WATCH DOGS**
FOR A WALK...



WE GO HANDS-ON
WITH **LEGACY OF KAIN**
SPIN-OFF **NOSGOTH**

FirstLook | NextMonth

**COMING
15TH
MAY**



**LEARN EVERYTHING
THERE IS TO KNOW
ABOUT WILDSTAR**

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